

Does society *really* want to reduce rape?

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Rape is a very serious crime and, thankfully, most jurisdictions regard it as such. Nevertheless, despite much government noise and the very considerable efforts of the many NGOs that focus on violence against women, in many countries the reported rape rates are climbing, rather than falling. Interestingly, many of those same governments and NGOs also campaign energetically against allowing civilians to possess firearms - and especially discourage their possession for self-defence.

The evidence that readily allowing "ordinary," law-abiding civilians to carry concealed guns for self-defence has reduced the murder rate, on a significant and sustained basis, in all those 38 States in the USA with such laws - and at a higher rate than in those 12 States without such laws, is powerful, consistent and persuasive. Researcher John Lott's (www.johnlott.com) ground-breaking work in 1993/6 has now been corroborated by many others and, most importantly, is supported strongly by the evidence "on the street" of steadily declining murder rates, now at the lowest levels seen in the USA for many decades.

Lott has shown that the relatively small proportion of the public that actually "carry," don't just protect themselves and their families - they help create a widening "halo" effect that benefits all society (except violent criminals [1]). The question is: does this halo effect also provide some protection for women from rape? If the public perception is that "ordinary" women may be carrying concealed guns, as well as men, does that tend to reduce rape rates, just as it does murder rates?

Professor Gary Kleck (<http://www.criminology.fsu.edu/p/faculty-gary-kleck.php>) showed in his 1991 book "*Point Blank*" that in a confrontation with a criminal, the use of a gun by the victim was, by far, the most successful strategy for the victim. But at that time very little data was available on rape attacks in which the woman had used a gun to defend herself. Clearly the size/strength difference between the genders is a real consideration in terms of a woman's personal security. It is not for nothing that the Colt revolver rapidly became known as "The Great Equalizer" after its launch in the 19th century.

Discouraging weapons and self-defence

The United Kingdom has long had a policy of discouraging effective self-defence, by criminalising anyone who has anything to hand that might be used for self-defence, much less a firearm. In other words, the authorities disarm victims. It has considerably strengthened this policy in recent years, by energetically seeking to prosecute anyone who actually uses, or even simply threatens to use, violence, especially with a weapon, to protect their property or person. These policies, particularly those intended to reduce civilian gun ownership, are strongly supported and promoted by a wide range of humanitarian NGOs, most of them funded by the taxpayer through the UK and other governments.

Both Australia and the UK have severe restrictions on lawful firearm ownership and both greatly increased the number of banned firearms in 1997/8, at great cost to the taxpayer. The very considerable - and generally greatly supportive - media publicity given to their firearm confiscation and destruction programmes is highly likely to have enhanced the general public's perception that self-defence is bad and anti-social. Unfortunately it may also have enhanced the criminals' view that

the general public (i.e. their victims) will likely be unarmed and will probably not fight back.

Which policies reduce rape and which appear to encourage it?

Since government actions and programmes seldom produce the results or benefits intended - and virtually never in a cost-effective manner - governments tend to be very bad at serious self-analysis, since this is likely to reveal that their policies don't work, or actually produce perverse results. But the evidence below, using the government's own statistics, that the disarming policies so strongly pursued by the UK and Australia, are seriously anti-social in their effects on rape rates, is very strong. The positive trend in the USA is striking by comparison, especially when it is appreciated that 12 of the 50 States in the USA still tend to deny their citizens the right to effective self-defence. Had those 12 States been excluded, the beneficial reduction would have been even more impressive. Thus the 10 States that introduced right-to-carry laws between 1995 and 1996, by 2004 had experienced on average a 30% greater annual decrease in the rate of rape than those 12. [7]

Rape Rate Trends 1995-2003 (per 100,000 pop.)

	1995	2003	Change, %
Australia [2], [3]	72.5	91.7	+26.5
United Kingdom [4], [5]	43.3	69.2	+59.8
United States [6]	37.1	32.1	-13.5

Conclusion

Disarming the general public does not disarm criminals and seems to encourage violent crime, including rape. Permitting armed self-defence to the general public significantly discourages criminal violence, including rape, producing beneficial effects for the population at large, including those who do not and would not carry a gun.

Notes

- 1 But some senior UK officials strongly believe that criminals also need protection. On the 12 December '04, the Attorney General for England and Wales, Lord Goldsmith, while strongly opposing recognising stronger self-defence rights for householders, was reported as stating, "They (i.e. criminals) don't lose all rights because they're engaged in criminal conduct." <http://www.opinion.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml;sessionid=KKS5A221NGR0NQFIQMFCM5OAVCBQYJVC?xml=/news/2004/12/12/nfight12.xml>
- 2 To arrive at 1995 rates per 100,000 population, reference the 1995 crime incidents on page 5 of Australian Crime Facts and Figures 2002, Australian Institute of Criminology, November, 2002, http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/facts/2002/facts_and_figures_2002.pdf and Australian 1995

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population numbers found at: Year Book Australia 2002, Australian Bureau of Statistics.

<http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/abs%40.nsf/94713ad445ff1425ca25682000192af2/0db74c39eee3a02fca256b350010b402!OpenDocument>

3 Recorded Crime -Victims, Australia, Australian Bureau of Statistics, May 27, 2004, Table 1, Victims By Offence Category-2003, Murder plus Manslaughter rates.

<http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/76c8926bd8a12e1fca2568a9001393f2?OpenDocument>

4 To arrive at UK 1995 rates per 100,000 population, reference the 1995 crime incidents on pages 40-41 of Crime in England and Wales 2002/2003. British Home Office, July 2003, Table 3.04, <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/hosb703.pdf> and UK 1995 population numbers found at: Interim revised population estimates: United Kingdom 1992-2000, United Kingdom National Statistics Online. <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/STATBASE/Expodata/Spreadsheets/D7080.xls>

5 Crime in England and Wales 2002/2003. British Home Office, July 2003, Table 3.04, pages 40-41. <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/pdfs2/hosb703.pdf>

6 FBI Crime in the United States by Volume and Rate, 1984-2003.

http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius_03/xl/03tbl01.xls

7 Uniform Crime Reports, Crime in the United States: 1995, page 64; 1996, page 72; 2004 page 86. <http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/ucr.htm> cross-referenced with Right-To-Carry 2005, NRA-ILA, March 17, 2005. <http://www.nraila.org/issues/FactSheets/Read.aspx?ID=18>

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